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A Scientists' Perspective on Research and Navy Medicine in San Antonio

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It was September of 2007 when I drove to the naval base at Great Lakes, IL. where the Naval Institute for Dental and Biomedical Research was located. This was my first time working in a Department of Defense laboratory and I was looking forward to working with scientists who were focused on medical technologies research.

My in processing was completed within hours (yes, I said hours), and I remember the CO and XO greeting me and welcoming me very warmly. I met with my department head, and the first thing she told me was that the project I was initially assigned to had been changed. I said to myself, wow, things already changed the first day of work. I realized, quickly, that the military's needs were constantly changing and I started thinking about how I

was going to adapt and be ready for the challenge.

We live in a world where everything is constantly changing, mainly due to the advances we make in technology. I always wanted to be in the middle of these changes, especially the ones that involve advances in medical technology. Learning new ways of treating and taking care of people has always been of interest to me.


Working in a Navy research laboratory, I'm now at the [Naval Medical Research Unit, San Antonio \(NAMRU-SA\)](#), and developing novel medical technologies has been, not only a great way for me to be in the middle of medical advancements, but it has also been fascinating. For example, in one of my current projects I am working with a team of scientists to develop an antimicrobial coating using nanodelivery systems. This coating can be used on titanium implants to reduce infections that often occur after patients undergo cranioplasties (a surgery to repair the skull). These types of projects allow me to do the science I love while also making strides toward helping our warfighters recover quickly after injury.


The complexity of injured warfighters' medical needs has necessitated that scientists from a variety of disciplines and locations come together, some here in San Antonio and some beyond, to work toward one goal — finding cutting-edge solutions for those changing medical needs.


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Whether working with the Navy here at NAMRU-SA, [Naval Medical Research Center](#), or [Walter Reed National Military Medical Center](#), or with the Army at the [U.S. Army Institute of Surgical Research](#) or [Walter Reed Army Institute of Research](#), I get to interact with some world-class researchers. I am very excited to be a part of this! We are encouraged to think in an unconventional manner, which helps us generate new knowledge and provide innovative solutions.

Another part of the job I love is that we are given the opportunity to train and guide the next generation of scientists. Our command provides high school, undergrad, grad, and resident students excellent opportunities for STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Math) learning. I have been involved with many of these initiatives like judging local science fairs, providing public lectures, as well as developing curriculum for after school programs for engineering neural networks.

Each year I also mentor a student, by way of a summer internship program, who is allowed to participate in a project that can be completed in a short amount of time and one that would also aid our lab in data collection. The work completed by our most recent student laid the foundation for the next phase of one of our studies. I know these experiences are invaluable to the students, which makes my job very rewarding in return. I know the upcoming generation of students has the ability to change the art of medicine and I am grateful that NAMRU-SA allows me to aid in that course.

Even though I joined the Navy lab in the midst of Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) changes, moving from Great Lakes, IL, to Brook City Base, TX, to Joint Base San Antonio at Fort Sam Houston, TX, I am still greatly satisfied when I think of the cutting edge medical research that we do here at NAMRU-SA.

Addressing the medical needs of injured warfighters and knowing that one day these advances in medical technologies will be integrated into military medical practice and will also be available to the medical community at large, is extremely satisfying. Going through changes can sometimes be rough, but I think they are definitely worth going through, especially in the military medical world where the work we do will affect how injured warfighters receive their medical treatment both on and off the battlefield.

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